

GREENS

222
177 The leaves of various plants are collected by women for use as vegetables (*mboro*). There is the "true" *mboro* and a species of fern called *ota*. The Chilean pepper, cabbage, and cress have been adopted.

KAVA GROWING

249 Ava plants for the making of kava are propagated by slips; the lower joints with a bud on each are planted. Sometimes they are raised over a flat stone so that the mass of the root grows upwards; the plant then holds on to the ground only by rootlets, which spread over and round the stone.

COCONUTS

245 The coconut tree affords a great many articles of everyday use: the root is used for dye; the stem for beams and rafters; the leaves for baskets, fans, and walls; the spathe for a torch; the reticula for sacks and strainers; the husk for coir; the shell for water bottles and cups; the flesh and kernel of the nut are good for men, pigs, and fowls.

A special name is given to each stage of the growing nut: *mataloa*, *sosou*, *mbu*, *kande*, *niu mandu* (mature nut), *vara* (sprouting nut). Special terms are also used in counting nuts.

When the owner wishes to cut copra, he reserves his coconut trees by setting up some mark, called *lele*, which usually includes portions of coconut leaves. These are merely signs and do not cause disease.

PLANTING PERIODS

805
1721 The months are called moons, and are lunar months. It is impossible at the present day to get a complete Lauan calendar, as the European system has displaced the old style of reckoning time. Yam planting determines the names of most months. The month of reeds is the one in which yams are dug up. Some months or series of months are vaguely designated as "digging months" or "months of maturity" (*vula i matua*). Some months are called after the fish that are caught at that season: thus about November comes the "great *palolo*," then the "little *palolo*," then the "great *nungga*," and the "little *nungga*": months when the yams are maturing, so there is no planting.

FIRST FRUITS

43
45 The word *seru* has a wide meaning. It may perhaps be best rendered by the verb "to handse," meaning "to begin a thing ceremonially." It applies chiefly however to the offering of first fruits from plantations.

March to April and October to November. The Tahitian chestnut is ripe on Kambara between January and March and on Fulanga and Ongea between February and April. The main digging moons (*vulai kelikeli*) are March and April when yams, sweet yams, sweet potatoes, manioc, maize, and other garden products are ripe. The term *vulai kelikeli* is used to denote especially the time of the yam and sweet yam harvest. The sweet potato harvest lasts until about November on some islands and manioc may be cut almost all year round. March is the moon when the leaves dry (*vulai mangomango* or *vulai mbotambota*). 805

The other seven months of the year, which include the dry season, are designated as follows: "clearing" moons (*vulai werewere*) for yams and sweet yams are roughly from May to July and the "planting" moons (*vulai teitei*) for the same crops from June to August. September is the main "sprouting" moon (*vulai tumbutumbu*) and September and October are the "ndrala flower" moons (*vulai se ni ndrala*), and the main flowering season. October, the month when the *mbalolo* (p. 136) is expected to appear first, is the moon of "few *mbalolo*" (*vulai mbalolo lailai*) and November, when the large mass of *mbalolo* are expected, is the moon of "many *mbalolo*" (*vulai mbalolo levu*).

SUBSISTENCE*

By BERNHARD TUETING

FOOD GATHERING

The gathering of food from the bush is considered indispensable everywhere in Lau, because dry years are frequent. But in years with normal rainfall most households produce enough garden foods. Households with little land or with few or indolent young men depend more upon gathering food than do more fortunate households. Most households of the Vuanikathu clan in Tokalau, Kambara, must collect food because they neglect their garden land. Vuanitavola clan in the same village needs to gather no food except greens, for the men of Vuanitavola work their lands well. The inhabitants of Fulanga and Ongea, where garden land is scarce, must gather food or increase their trade with other islands. 222 ●

The inhabitants of Undu on Kambara have little garden land and seldom go to it because the food from the garden must be carried over a difficult path, or poled by canoe half way around the island. Since Undu has good bush land with many fruit trees, the natives gather larger quantities of wild fruit, nuts, and leaves than do the inhabitants of Tokalau, Lomatchi, and Nggaling-gali. Tender green leaves are collected from the bush by the women of all [482
505]

* This section includes food gathering, fishing, hunting, animal husbandry, and gardening.

- 222 the islands. Today the leaves of the cultivated sweet potato are also eaten. The stems, with the leaves adhering, are broken from the plants and placed in baskets which are strapped to the back in the same way as bundles of wood (p. 151).

Fruits, especially those eaten raw, are usually gathered by boys, but the *ndawa*, the Tahitian chestnut (*iri*), and the *vala* are gathered under the supervision of grown men. On all the islands the Tahitian chestnut and *vala* are gathered and esteemed highly. In harvesting the *vala*, care is taken not to harm the trees. Boys climb the tree and push or twist off the fruit clusters with a straight or a forked stick. The men gather them from the ground and boys or men carry them home in baskets on a stick resting on the shoulder. [48] Usually two baskets are carried on one stick, one behind, the other in front of the shoulder. The lower branches of the Tahitian chestnut tree are picked by hand. The upper branches are picked from the ground with a stick, or a boy climbs the tree to shake the branches and loosen the nuts with a stick.

222 Other fruits gathered from the bush are: *yaka* (*Pueraria thunbergiana*),
262 *yaumitha* (*Malaisia scandens*), *yangai*, *tarai*, important especially on Fulanga; *songa* (the fruit of the mangrove) eaten on Fulanga and Ongea, *mbau levu*, *mbau thana*, preferred to the larger *mbau levu* because of its sweetness, *mbawaki*, and *nggalaka*.

[21] Arrowroot (*yambia*, *Tacca pinnatifida*), the tuber of which was formerly the staple on the volcanic islands, is eaten only in years of drought, except on Fulanga and Ongea, where it is eaten often. The arrowroot does not grow on Kambara.

[20] The *wangiri* nut, formerly the staple on the limestone islands and Kambara, is eaten occasionally on Fulanga and Ongea, but elsewhere only in times of famine. It does not grow on the volcanic islands.

[26] Sugar, extracted from wild ti root, is used to sweeten puddings.

Yavato, an edible grub (the larva of the long-horned prionid beetle, *Olethrius*) found in decaying trees, is highly prized. Men search for grubs in old tree trunks lying in the bush. On Kambara I watched a European-Fijian half-caste searching for grubs. The saliva ran from his mouth when he found an old trunk with many holes eaten into the wood. Roughly he cleaned off the dust of decaying, moulding wood with his hands and hastily ate 46 grubs.

The coconut crab (*unga rule*) is considered a great delicacy. The crab, which weighs up to 12 pounds, is caught by men who turn it on its back and tie vines around it so that the legs are lashed to the body. [48] A stick is pushed under the vine and the crab is slung on the shoulder.

Birds' eggs are never gathered or eaten, but turtles' eggs, found on the beach, are relished.

Concerning food gathering in the past, Moto, an old man of the Matasoata clan in Undu, gave the following information: 222 ●

When I was a boy we always gathered our food. Men, women, and children gathered fruits and nuts, and the women and children gathered leaves. Our everyday food was the *wangiri* nut. It grows on a vine in the bush. The black, shelled nuts were roasted and eaten right in the bush. If we had some nuts left after satisfying our appetites, we took them home in a basket of coconut leaves and sank the basket into salt water to make fermented food (*mandrai*), as we do now with manioc or breadfruit. [415] [252]

When I was a boy about the size of Nggauma [who was fifteen] we had no real garden land on Kambara. Where the gardens are on Ndelaoloi near Tokalau, trees were growing, mainly the Tahitian chestnut and the *ndawa*. We had no manioc except *manioka ni India*, which was poisonous, and the poison had to be extracted before it could be eaten. We had the white and red sweet potato; the brownish ones came later. When I was a boy we did not have as many sweet potatoes as we have today. We planted very small patches only, usually among the trees where the bush did not grow too thickly. Gradually the fruit trees on Ndelaoloi died away and the land was used for gardens. We had no real yams, only the sweet yam (*katwai*) and the *kaile* and a very few wild yam (*tchivoli*). We planted wild yam and *kaile* only in the bush where we found them growing wild. We did not need to search for wild yam because we knew where they grew and also knew to whom they belonged. Sometimes we planted from three to four sweet yam plants together. We dug no real holes and never made mounds as we do today.

FISHING

The waters surrounding the islands of Lau are rich in fish. On clear days, as one passes by canoe over the colorful lagoons, large schools can be seen moving over the white bottom and slowly drawing around the coral limestone formations, which stretch under the water like colored hills and valleys. [226] [136]

Fishing techniques differ on the various islands, due to the character of the coast, the lagoon, and the reef; to the depth and clearness of water; to the currents; and to the kind of fish prevalent in the vicinity.

Women catch most of the daily supply of fish in nets. Only when fishing becomes a sport, as in spearing, or when it is connected with a ceremony, as in communal fishing, do men participate. The master fisherman has charge of communal fishing and the fishing grounds (p. 51). There is less organized fishing today than there was in the past. Usually fishing is done by small groups, who disturb the fish so that actually fewer and smaller ones are now caught. The master fisherman of Kambara says that if the people do not ask permission before they go fishing they do not make a good catch.

FISHING WITH NETS

Tatanga. The *tatanga* is a rectangular net not quite one fathom wide and about one fathom long. It is spread out by two sticks, 3 to 4 cm. in diameter, one attached to each short side of the net. Three to six women blacken their faces with ashes, especially the region around the eyes, as a protection from sun. Each woman takes a *tatanga* net, rolls it around two sticks, and carries it on her shoulder or in her hand. On Kambara the women use diving goggles, called *sucimarini* (submarine), which are said to have been introduced about ten years ago. The nets are unfolded on the beach. Women prefer [302] [751]

KAMBARA, A FAMINE ISLE

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volcanic island of Lakemba, home of the high chief of Lau, 131
 far out of sight to the north. Visible between Komo and 133
 Namuka is the fertile volcanic island of Mothe, the point of
 departure of canoes for the Tongan archipelago, 400 miles to
 the east. Visible to the east is the uninhabited Yangasa cluster
 of islets, and to the southeast Fulanga and Ongea, all of forested
 limestone formation. Out of sight still farther to the south
 lie Vatoa and Ono, the southernmost islands in the Lau group.

Kambarans have relatives on most of these islands, as well 602
 as on the Moala group to the west, and in the Fijian capital
 city of Suva. These kinship ties demark the boundaries of
 their physical world. Only within the limits of this world,
 among their relatives, are they at home.

Kambara is called the "cave of wealth"¹ on account of her 137
 forests of hardwood. The most valued hardwood is greenheart 322
 of India (*Intsia bijuga*) used for making sailing canoes and 439
 other woodwork. Although the finest greenheart is found on
 Kambara, it grows well also on the neighboring islands of
 Wangava, Fulanga, and Ongea, but nowhere else in Fiji or
 Tonga. Based upon this natural monopoly, a famous wood-
 craft industry has developed in southern Lau. The group
 formerly supplied Fiji and Tonga with fast and powerful
 large double war canoes, and still provides many parts of
 Fiji with picturesque mat-sailed canoes, used extensively on
 inter-island voyages, and with shining carved wooden bowls,
 gongs and headrests.

In spite of forest resources, Kambara, Fulanga and Ongea 134
 are known in Fiji as "famine isles" on account of the dearth
 of arable land. The limestone base of these three islands, and
 of Wangava and Yangasa as well, has not decomposed suffi-
 ciently to form good garden land, and pockets of arable soil
 are scarce and shallow. Gardening, the usual basis of sub- 134
 sistence in Lau, must be supplemented in the famine group 222 ●

¹ "Nggara-ni-tambua": literally whale's tooth cave, for the ivory tooth of the sperm 435
 whale represents the highest value in Lau.

134 by extensive collecting from jungles and reefs, and by regular
222 fishing in the lagoons. Of the group, Fulanga has the least
soil. The natives say this is because the first inhabitant of
[773] Fulanga was a hen. She had some chicks and when the chicks
were hungry she said: "Why don't you scratch?" So they
scratched and scratched and finally they scratched the bottom
out of the land. The chicks are the people of Fulanga and
[103] the jagged pock-marked island is called Vanua Seu or
scratched land.

773 Kambara differs from the other famine isles in that its
134 volcanic outcrop provides a limited amount of good garden
land. When the great forefather god of the Kambara people
arrived he looked over the whole island and saw nothing but
rocks. So he thought to himself he would go to another
island and steal a piece of land, for the gods love nothing
better than to trick one another. He went to the islands of
the Lau group, but each island was guarded by its own fore-
father god. Finally he arrived at Vatoa. The forefather of
this island was asleep. So the forefather of Kambara dug
[823] up a piece of land. A spring gushed forth from the hole.
He put the land into a basket and took it to Kambara. When
he arrived he found that the people of Kambara had baked
a piece of land he had previously stolen and made it useless
for gardening. He was very angry and placed the land from
Vatoa on the side of Kambara (instead of in the middle as
on the volcanic islands). On all Kambara this is the only
[823] garden land, and when the water of the spring in Vatoa is
dirty the people know yams are being planted on Kambara.

264 Provision for the evening meal is a daily problem requir-
ing foresight and labor. The Lauans eat one main meal a
day just after sundown when the day's work is done. The
252 main food consists of a carbohydrate (called "true food")
[262] such as manioc, sweet potato, or breadfruit gathered, prepared,
and steamed in the earth oven by the men. The earth oven
is a pit in the ground in which the food is placed over hot

KAMBARA, A FAMINE ISLE

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Formerly when they were allowed free run in the villages²⁶²
each household owned a goodly number and pork was eaten²³¹
frequently. However, since pigs must be kept in pens accord-
ing to government regulation and fed daily, their number
has dwindled. Now pork is rarely served except at a feast
for a visiting government official or a wedding of considerable
importance. While in southern Lau, I was served pork only
three times.

Although shining copper-green jungle fowl and grey-blue²²⁴
doves abound in the forests they are rarely eaten, for the^[136]
natives are forbidden by colonial regulation to possess firearms^[656]
and they have not adequate means or energy to trap them.
One of the few jungle fowl traps I saw on Kambara had been
placed in a tree laden with bright red berries on which the
fowl feed. The trapper had hopefully put a sprig of berries
in the trap and could not understand why no fowl were
ensnared. Each household has a few domestic fowl which^[231]
must be fed regularly. Native custom does not admit the
eating of chicken eggs, but the flesh adds an important source
of protein to the monotonous native diet.

Great grotesque coconut crabs lurk in the limestone crevices²²² ●
under the palms, but they are so difficult to find that they^[262]
are seldom eaten. I tasted this delicious South Sea food only
once. While examining an old fortress site near the highest
point on Wangava we caught sight of a giant crab, weighing
at least ten pounds, sidling over the jagged rocks at the foot
of a lone and aged coconut palm. The native boys pounced
upon the ferocious creature and, gleefully anticipating the
evening's feast, lashed it to a pole, which one of them slung
over his shoulder and proudly carried back to camp.

A few scraggly pet dogs and scrawny cats and occasionally²³¹
a piglet haunt the village kitchen huts and earth ovens in²⁶²
search of scraps of food and refuse. Dogs are not eaten today,
but the natives say that in the past they were a favored dish
reserved for men only.

There was apparently little if any gardening on these islands [247] before the introduction of manioc and sweet potato in recent [177] times, inasmuch as yams, taro, and bananas, the main native garden products of Fiji, grow poorly in this soil. Jungle [222] products formerly provided the staple food. According to [262] informants, the *wangiri* nut was the staple on the limestone islands and Kambara, while the *yambia* (*Tacca pinnatifida*) was the staple on the volcanic islands. Collecting of fruits, nuts, tubers, green leaves, and wood grubs in the bush was [231] supplemented by many kinds of fishing, pig and fowl raising, [225] and by hunting sea turtle and coconut crabs. Moreover, [439] food was and is still imported from the volcanic islands in [463] exchange for craft products. The development of craftsmanship was based on the presence of rare and valuable resources such as hardwoods, the finest types of paper mulberry for making barkcloth, and pandanus. Carpentry, fishing and in recent times barkcloth making, were organized under hereditary specialists and a high degree of technical skill was attained. Before the first contact with western civilization, canoes, wooden bowls, drums, weapons, barkcloth, mats, and perfumed oil from the southern islands were in demand throughout Fiji and Tonga.

The native Lauan economic system still functions with slight [476] modifications today. It is still closely integrated with the [614] whole social and religious life of the natives. Practically all work is done in kinship groups. Even now a man labors not for himself but primarily for his clan. The main task of production is borne by the household or the sub-clan, depending on the size of the group and the nature of the task. Work requiring many hands, such as house and canoe building and barkcloth making, is done communally by a clan or village group under the direction of a specialist. Important steps such as the planting and harvesting of yams, the felling of the hull or launching of a canoe, the erection of the main house-posts and the completion of the house are marked by